

# OFA Diversity Council

## Minutes of Meeting

June 13, 2001

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**Attendees:** Stewart Remer, Maxine Hodges, Barbara Martin, Margaret A. Smith, Barbara Marshall-Bailey, Terri Bell, Michelle T. Moore, Steve Drescher for Helen Hurcombe, Nana Dayo-Otekurin, Joanne V. Kemper, Randy Kremkau for Zane Schauer, Stan Lum, Stuart Williams, Charlotte Melton, Arlene Porter, Carolyn DeMatteo for David Murdock

Video Conference: Barry Meyer, Amy N. Gibbs, Barbara Booker Williams, Shirley L. Driver-Kinchen, Kelly Sandy, Harry Sawisch, Anita Holley

**Opening:** Stu Remer opened the meeting.

**Minutes:** Stu asked if anyone had any changes to the minutes of the May 2 meeting – the minutes were approved. He reminded the members that originally it was decided that the minutes would be shared with all OFA employees. Although this hasn't been done, Stu said that an e-mail was being drafted and the minutes for the last three meetings would be forwarded.

**SFA:** Barbara Marshall-Bailey reported on the status of the SFA. She told members that they had received the bids from contractors and that the ranking of bids was in process and should be completed next week.

Charlotte Melton proceeded to report on the status in OFA stating that a coordinators meeting was held. They are currently receiving feedback which includes experiences coming out of the last SFA – still waiting to hear back from several offices. She said that they were also looking at the 1998 form to see where it could still be improved.

The definition of a workgroup was raised. Kelly Sandy and Barbara discussed the relative importance of having the survey administered at the workgroup level vs. a higher supervisory level in the organization. Kelly felt that the survey wouldn't be harmed if administered at a higher supervisory level especially in organizations with small workgroups (ten or less). Barbara stated that the SFA is designed to capture information at the workgroup level. This would not preclude obtaining aggregate data at the division level. However, gathering information at the division level would preclude obtaining data at the workgroup level and wouldn't provide individual workgroups/managers data that could be used to improve office

work environments (one of the survey's objectives). Kelly then expressed that the usefulness of having survey results specific to the lowest level of supervision did not seem to be important in the last survey since the bottom ten topics were not necessarily the topics each group wanted most to discuss. Barbara expressed that the bottom ten would probably be different among different workgroups and divisions, and that the workgroup reports were only meant to be a starting point for workgroups discussions about their specific areas.

There was considerable discussion on the size of a workgroup. Kelly Sandy and Barbara Marshall-Bailey discussed the relative importance of having the survey administered at a smaller workgroup level versus a higher supervisory level in the organization. Kelly offered the position that the survey would not be harmed by being administered at higher supervisory levels, especially in organizations with small workgroups (10 or less). Barbara said that reports are issued workgroup of five or more and that would not provide valuable feedback unless administered at the lowest level. Also that the intention of the SFA is to promote discussion at the lower level and, therefore, the survey would be harmed by requesting data at higher supervisory levels. One of the SFA objectives is to provide data to employees and obtaining data at the higher supervisory level would preclude the retrieval of necessary information (i.e., workgroup problems) the should be discussed at lower levels.

Charlotte said that there are two main issues:

- critical to define workgroup, and
- survey is too long.

As far as the survey being too long, it was reported that the next survey will be on the internet making it easier to complete. Barbara said that the 1998 survey was the original OPM survey with NOAA add-ons and the new survey will be shortened to the extent possible. She further explained that the purpose of the survey was to empower workgroups to make change, change that is fundamental to OFA.

Barbara mentioned that "workgroup" will be defined on the web and in the training sessions. Also, the survey will be on an interactive website and once the results are in, the information will be in the hands of the workgroups, not the Diversity Office. Hence the importance of making sure that the workgroups are properly defined.

Three ASCs chimed in on these issues and stressed the importance of feedback. Kelly Sandy stated that there was an assumption that the feedback would tell what the workgroups should talk about, but it didn't. Barbara Booker Williams asked what the projected time was between the SFA and receiving feedback. Members were informed that it was expected that it would take six months from when the contract is awarded. It was stated that the last survey took more time than expected because some LOs asked that the closing be extended.

**Worklife Center:** Barbara Marshall-Bailey handed out copies of the NOAA Worklife Services Matrix and asked that the consortium look at it one more time before it is finalized. Copies are to be sent to members participating by video conference. Stu asked the Council to review the document and identify duplications or any other issues that they thought should be fixed. If members think that something doesn't fit into the worklife area, let the Diversity Office know and explain why they don't think it belongs.

Barbara discussed the opening of the Worklife Center on June 21 and handed out stress balls that will be distributed at the opening ceremony. The Council then watched a video that will be shown during the opening. The Center's theme is, "We are where you are." This is to demonstrate that although the Center is in Silver Spring, the effort to improve the quality of worklife reaches out to the regions. Information will be available in various formats including on a Worklife Center web site and a counselor will be available to help all NOAA employees. The counselor assigned to the Center is Kathleen Harrington.

Barbara gave Victoria two copies of the book "Mentoring Dilemmas - Developmental Relationships Within Multicultural Organizations," by Audrey J. Murrell (February 1999) which Victoria distributed for members to review. If you have finished reviewing the books, please return them to Victoria so they will be available for others.

**Performance Appraisals:** Stu reported that supervisors do have diversity information in their performance plans. He then discussed how supervisors would obtain information about members participation on the Council. He said that he will share the following information with supervisors:

- participation on Action Teams,
- participation at Council meetings,
- kind of information you share with your organization,
- how well you get the word out on diversity, and
- will inform supervisor if member is doing something more than attending meetings

- if a member doesn't have time to attend, maybe someone else should take over.

**Telecommuting:** The DoC Draft Telecommuting Policy is out. OFA will be reviewing this policy to see if it is appropriate for NOAA or if OFA needs to develop a separate policy and/or if the LOs need to develop a policy. Stu announced that Victoria Kruk is the OFA Telecommuting contact.

### **Action Team Reports:**

#### **Customer Service Action Team – Chair: Bud Sawisch**

Bud reported that the customer survey form had been distributed and that they have received some feedback and are waiting for more responses. They are already making corrections and adjustment requirements of the ASCs. They plan to have the final version ready around July 16.

#### **Communications Action Team – Chair: Barry Meyer**

Barry reported that Team reviewed a demo on teleconferencing. They have also been working with the systems people on an OFA intranet web site "bulletin board" that will be used to announce OFA activities and items of interest. Stu asked Barry to get with Victoria about a newsletter that she's been working on and with Jim Carter and Rich Haley to make sure there is no duplication of effort.

Barbara Marshall-Bailey said that the NOAA Diversity Council is putting information on ACCESS NOAA rather than having a separate newsletter.

Steve Drescher reported that he had seen an MCI presentation that provided a better tool for training – a presentation on line – and that he was impressed with this computer linked system.

#### **Consistency Action Team – Chair: RJ Dominic**

In RJ's absence, Arlene Porter reported that the draft OFA AWS plan is with Helen Hurcombe for some final adjustments. Significant changes include an expanded flexband, 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with core hours from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There was a discussion of one half hour to one hour lunch. It was mentioned that with a 15 minute break in the a.m. and a 15 minute break in the p.m., employees could take a one hour lunch. Stu questioned the 15 minute break issue and asked if anyone had seen a current policy document requiring such breaks and, if so, to please send him a copy.

#### **Career Development Action Team – Chair: Mary T. Drake**

In Mary's absence, Stan Lum reported that the Team is working on an OFA Leadership Competency Development Plan (LCDP). He reported that the NOAA Corporate Training Council would like to consolidate all LO plans into one NOAA-

wide program. Stu asked that Stan have Mary report on when the Council would see the draft plan.

**Closing:** Stu asked if there was any other issues for discussion. There were no further issues and the meeting was closed.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, August 1, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., in Silver Spring. It was decided that this will be a video conference and will be held in SSMC4-13153.

**Action Items:**

- 1) Members are to review the NOAA Worklife Services Matrix and contact the Diversity Office with any suggestions.
- 2) Members should advertise the opening of the Worklife Center to assure a good turnout.
- 3) Members are to provide feedback on customer survey form if they haven't already done so.
- 4) Barry Meyer is to coordinate with Victoria Kruk, Jim Carter, and Rich Haley on publication of OFA activities/issues.
- 5) Draft AWS plan to be distributed to members for review.
- 6) Stan to ask Mary when Council will see the draft LCDP.